

NSC BRIEFING

MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

23 December 1958

- I. In Iraq, where Prime Minister Qasim cracked down on military and civilian conspirators, the situation remains tense.
 - A. Qasim appears increasingly dependent on the local Communists who control the street. However, government officials are again privately asserting that strong measures against Communists are imminent.
 - B. If the government does not move against them soon, Army commanders, who are in touch with Nasir, will presumably look for the appropriate time to overthrow Qasim.
 - C. Internal security situation might get out of hand should these forces clash and in such event there would be serious danger to foreign nationals.
 - D. Nasir, meanwhile, is undecided on how he should attempt to influence the situation.
- II. Tumult elsewhere in area typified by reports we have received in last few days of possible deaths and proposed assassinations of local leaders.

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III. Israelis meanwhile have at least partially avenged themselves on Nasir by shooting down one, and possibly two, UAR MIG-17 aircraft over the Sinai border.

A. This may be Israeli retaliation for both Syrian artillery fire against border settlements early this month and for more recent photo reconnaissance forays which Israelis say the UAR has made.

B. The Israeli's account of the air fight indicates that they utilized superior tactics, in effect luring the UAR aircraft over the border and then jumping them from behind. Incidents such as this tend to confirm Israeli confidence that Arabs can still be beaten despite Israel's inferiority in quantity of equipment.